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IDYLS AND PASTORALS

BY
CELIA THAXTER



A HOME GALLERY OF POETRY AND ART

TWENTY-FOUR PHOTOGRAVURES
FROM PICTURES BY AMERICAN ARTISTS

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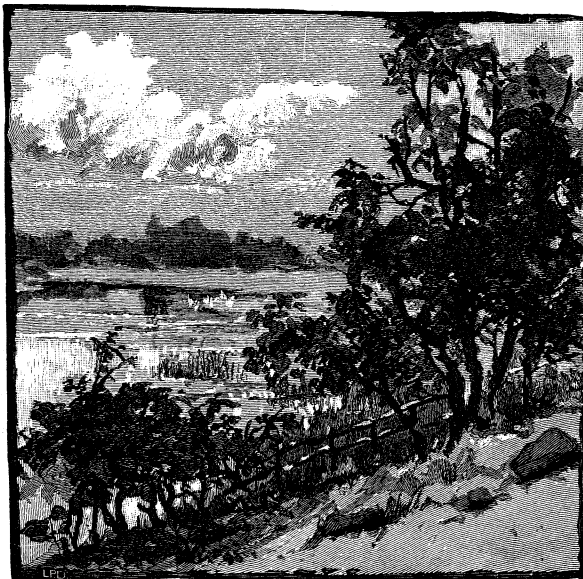


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IDYLS AND PASTORALS

THE FAVORITE FLOWER.

O THE warm, sweet, mellow summer noon,
The golden calm and the perfumed air,
The chirp of birds and the locust's croon,
The rich flowers blossoming still and fair.
The old house lies 'mid the swarming leaves
Steeped in sunshine from porch to eaves,
With doors and windows thrown open wide
To welcome the beauty and bloom outside.

Through the gateway and down the walk,
Madge and grandmother, hand in hand
Come with laughter and happy talk,
And here by the marigolds stop and stand.

"What a dear old pleasant place it is!"

Cries the little maid in a trance of bliss,

"Never anywhere could be found

So sweet a garden the whole world round!

"Tell me, grandmother, which do you think,

Is the dearest flower for you that grows!

The phlox, or the marigold stars that wink,

Or the larkspur quaint, or the red, red rose?

Which do you love best, grandmother dear?"

And the old dame smiles in the blue eyes clear—

"Of all the flowers I ever possessed,

I think, my precious, I love you best!"





COMRADES.

WHO that is merciful and wise
Knows not how dumb companions fond
Look up to man with loving eyes,
Safe held in friendship's sacred bond!
The hound salutes the kindly hand
That has taught him to love and not to fear,
The falcon still on his perch will stand
Listening for voices he loves to hear,
And the spaniels watch the lovely boy
Half pleased, half scared at the curious toy;
Mute friends! They are grateful if they may share
In human comfort or human care.

You have had many a beautiful hour,
O comrades faithful and tried and true!
O fair child, ripening to youth's rich flower,
What pleasant fortune has fallen to you!
And grandfather, holding your treasure fast,
More blessed are you than all the rest.
For he brings you afresh the joys of the past,
As the after glow kindles the fading west.
The happy circle gathers close
In an atmosphere of sweet repose,
Unvexed by word or look austere,
For love is the only ruler here.



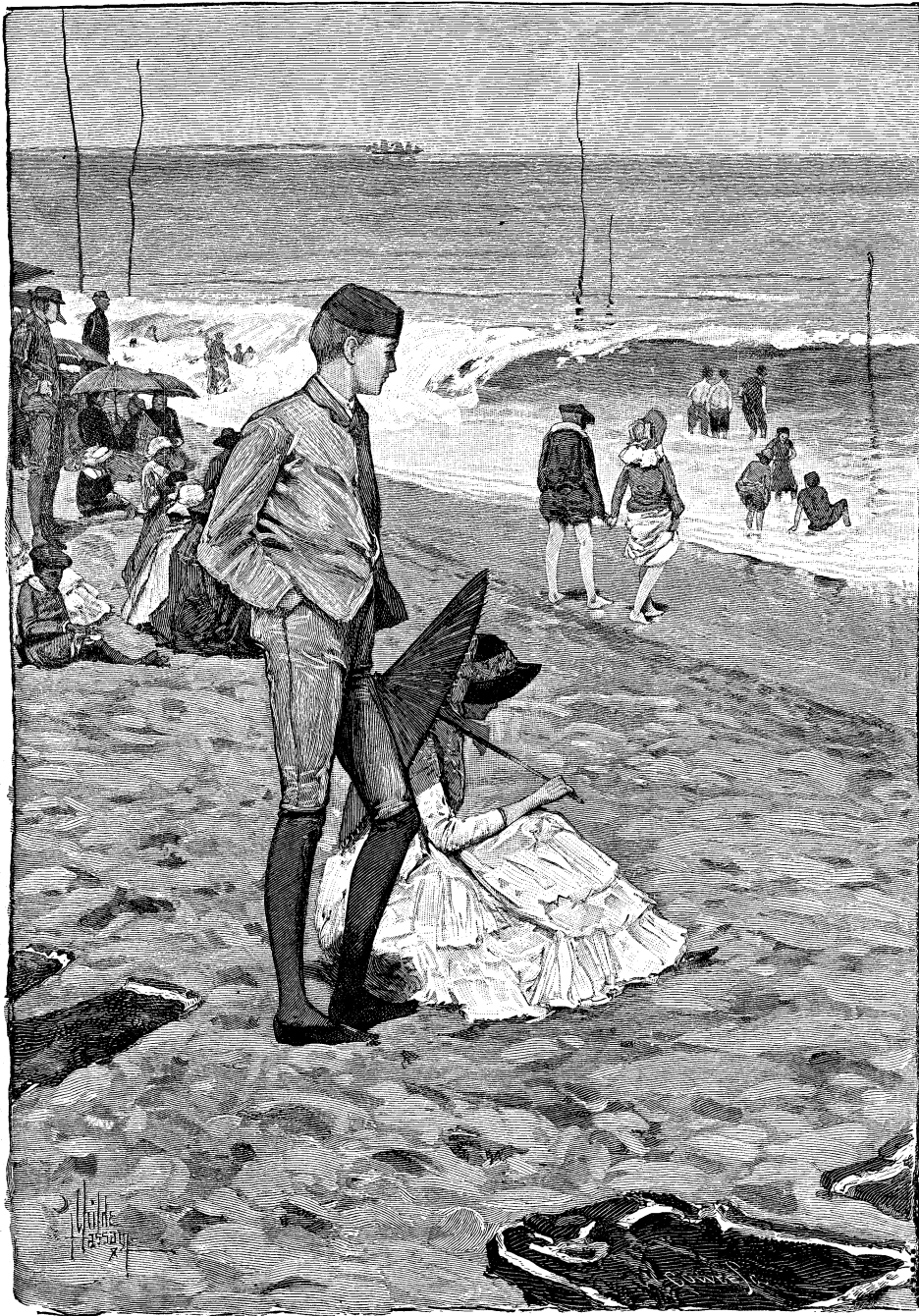


ON THE BEACH.

THE slow, cool, emerald breaker curving clear
Along the sparkling edge of level sand,
Shatters its crystal arch, and far and near
In broken splendor spills upon the land.
With rush and whisper siren-sweet and soft
Gently salutes the children of the earth,
And catching every sunbeam from aloft
Flashes it back in summer mood of mirth;
And with a flood of strong refreshment pours
Health and delight along the sounding shores.

Amid its frolic foam and scattered spray
Tossed lightly, like some dreaming lion's mane,

The tired dwellers of the city play,
Forgetful for awhile of care and pain,
While peace broods over all, nor does it seem
As if the sleeping lion could awake;
And yet, when passed is this sweet summer dream,
What roar of thunder on the coast will break
When winter's tempests rage in sullen wrath —
Death and disaster in their cruel path —
And hurl against the sandy margin gray
Devouring fury, tumult and dismay!





THE TRAINING OF A PRINCE.

O STRONG young son of a king!

What is it thou shalt not know?

Not only to draw the twanging string

From the perfect curve of the bow,

And straight thine arrow send

To the distant target's heart,

But all good gifts their power would lend,—

Here, the musician's art,

There, hound and horn and hunter bold

The joys of the chase would teach;

The courtier's graces manifold,—

The poet's golden speech,—

All wisdom and knowledge and beauty wait
To make thee noble and crown thy state.

Wilt thou be first in the fight
Among the warriors great?
And will thy hand in the lute delight
Wooing a lovely mate?

Wilt thou rule wisely many a year
With a firm grasp on the helm,
And the ship of the nation safely steer
Though storms would overwhelm?

Be thou thy people's pride and joy,
Wide may thy praises ring,
And growing from the princely boy
To the stature of a king,
Thine arrows of lofty purpose send
Ever straight to the mark, for foe or friend!





LOST.

Low burns the sunset and the dark is near:

O where is home! O where my mother's face!

The long night is before me, full of fear;

Of the familiar path there is no trace.

The evening wind blows damp upon my cheek,

The stars begin to twinkle high and clear,

In vain for sign of hope or help I seek,

For all is strange and lone and sad and drear.

No human sound comes to my anxious ear,

No cattle low, no dog barks far away,

Only the ripple of the frogs I hear,

And the thrush singing to the dying day.

Under my feet the sweet fern sprays I crush
With tangled vines and dead leaves brown and sere,
Faint spicy odors rise—a dewy hush
Steals o'er the dusky landscape far and near.

Will never more the lights of home appear?

The blessed lights of home! Where shall I turn,
East, west, north, south, to find a ray of cheer?

Where, in the darkness, do those tapers burn?
Weary, despairing, sorrowful I stray.

How must your heart be aching, mother dear!
O friends who surely seek me, come this way!
O that my cry might reach you! I am *here*!





THE MINUTE MEN.

HEROES on History's height!

Who leaped at the first alarm,
To meet their death or to win the fight,
From forge and workshop and farm;
Seizing the ready gun,
With hearts on fire, to stand
For wife and child against the foe,
For home and their own dear land,
Resolute, every one,
To strike the mighty blow!

Firm as the solid rock
On Concord's soft green sward

Their feet are planted to meet the shock,

Love, honor and peace to guard,

To strike for Liberty!

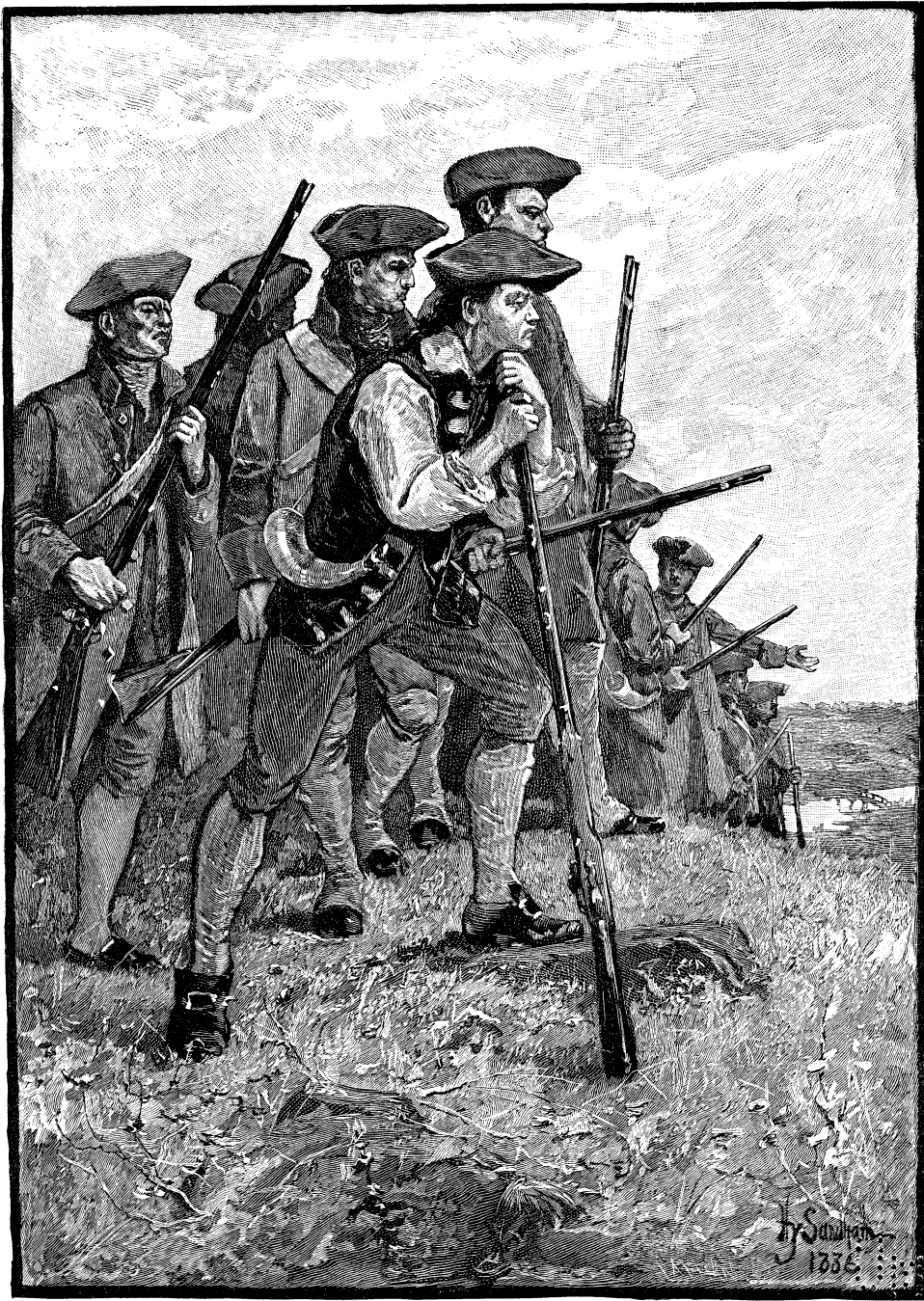
For the signal shot they wait,

Dauntless and stern and still,

To wrench from the hand of fate

With the strength of an iron will,

Freedom and Victory!





WILD DUCKS.

I LIFT my voice to the breeze,

A harsh and broken call,

To mix with the roar of the seas

And the rush of the waterfall;

With noises stormy and rude

I love to mingle my cry,

In the heart of the solitude

Where nothing human is nigh.

When the tempest lashes the wood,

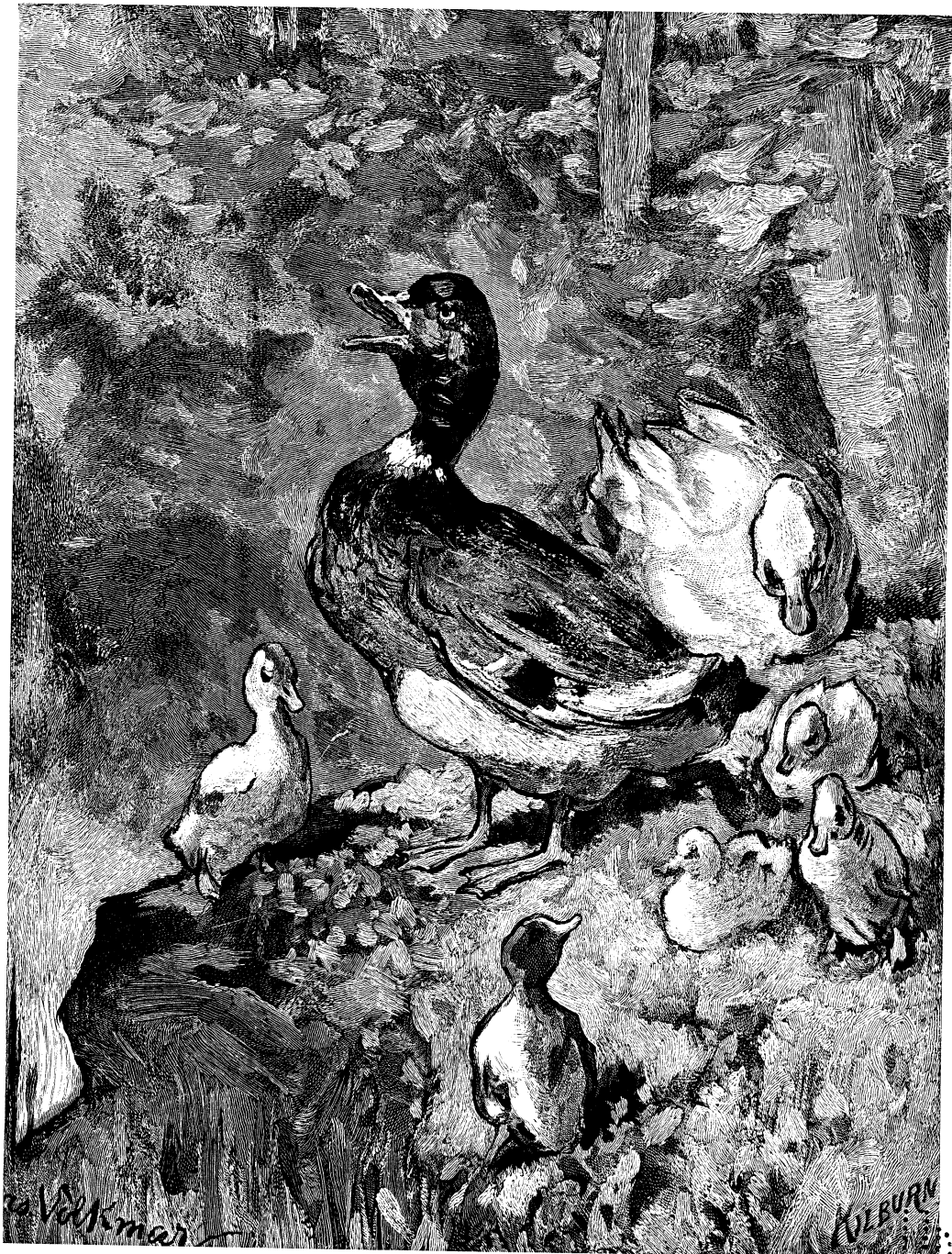
And over the marshland sings,

Then gathers my callow brood

'Neath my mate's protecting wings;

But I, from the edge of the crag,
Launch out on the sweeping gale,
With pinions that never flag,
And a courage that does not quail

I ride on the heaving brine
That breaks into seething foam,
For the earth and the air are mine,
And the water my buoyant home.
A joyful life I lead,
And I envy no one's lot,
But for one boon I plead —
O mortal, molest me not!





A SUNNY NOOK.

'Mid bayberry, fern, sweet brier,
With many a nodding weed,
And the golden-rod's plume of fire,
I have made a nest indeed!
Against the earth's warm breast,
All fragrant with yielding moss
And spicy twigs, I rest,
While the leaves in the light airs toss,
And I feel a part of the good, glad earth
In her summer mood of joy and mirth.

O who would covet a throne

When a nook could be found like this

Any peasant might call his own,
With its boon of innocent bliss?
With the bird and the bee to share
Such largess of sunshine sweet,
Afar from the loud world's care,
And its turmoil of hurrying feet!
I envy no king in the world, not I,
As here on the earth's warm breast I lie!

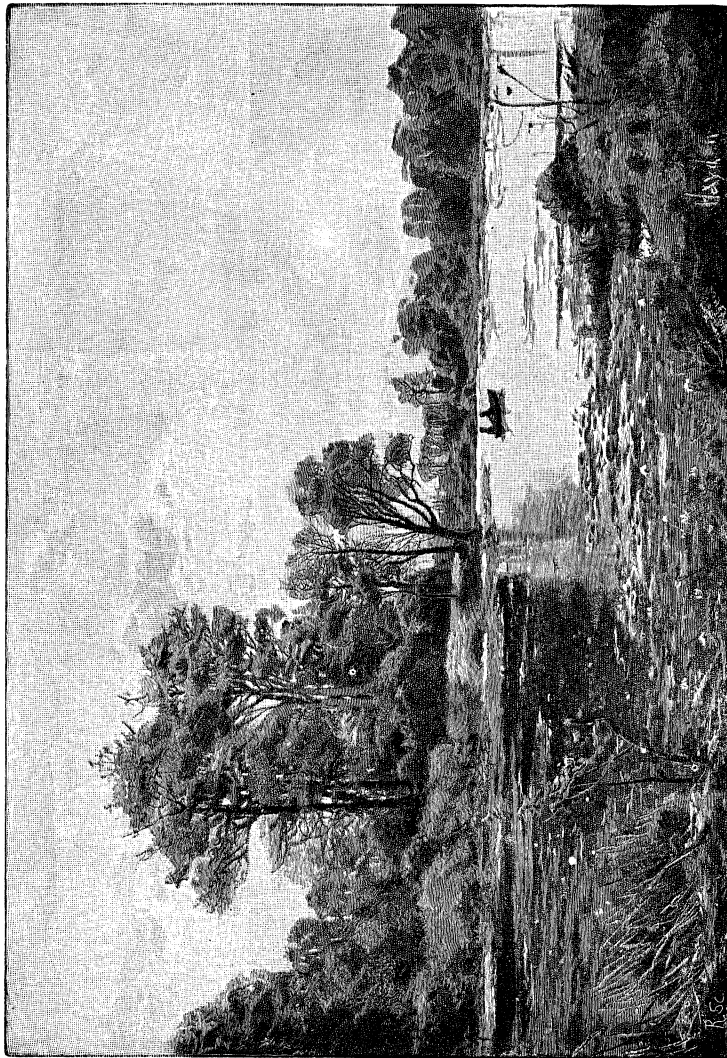




ON QUIET WATERS.

O LIGHTLY moored the lilies lie,
And look up to the golden sky.
Softly they breathe into the air
Their holy fragrance everywhere:
Delicate, dewy-fresh and sweet,
It steals our charmèd sense to greet.
In each pure chalice, dazzling white,
Sits throned a spirit of delight
Our grateful souls with joy to fill,
A pleasure sacred, deep and still,
O lightly moored the lilies lie
Afloat beneath the glowing sky!

From shadow cool to sunshine clear
Safe past the changing shores we steer,
And watch the swallow dip his wing,
And hear the hidden thrushes sing
Each to his mate within the wood,
Safe in their happy solitude.
O perfect morn! O peaceful time!
O life that blossoms at its prime!
We dream in Eden, thou and I,
Afloat beneath the golden sky.





FEEDING THE DOVES.

Coo, coo, my pretty doves, fly lightly here !

See, snowy rice and golden grain I spill !

Come wheeling through the wide air far and near,

Come from the gray old tower and take your fill.

Swell your soft breasts and curve each graceful neck

With rainbows spanned, and ruffle all your plumes

So dainty fine and clean, without a speck,

Lustrous as changing silk from Lyons looms.

Suzette is calling, — there is naught to fear !

Coo, coo, my pretty doves, fly lightly here !

Sure as the constant morning comes Suzette

To bring you food, you know she will not fail, —

Crossing the tender grass all dewy-wet :

Her welcome voice you hear, and down you sail,

Her pets, her pleasures, planting rosy feet

Upon the green and gazing brilliant-eyed,

Askance up to her face with crooning sweet,

Lifting your shining heads in love and pride

For all obey her well-known summons dear,

“Coo, coo, my pretty doves, fly lightly here!”





THE DREAM PEDLER.

Lo, I come from dreamland dim,
Down the drowsy air I swim,
Ringing soft a pleasant tune,
Through the sharp horns of the moon ;
All that fancy fine can paint
Of fair or sweet or wild or quaint,
Through your brain I'll set adrift,
When my slender wand I lift.

Hark, what fairy breezes blow !
Tinkles ice and flutters snow,
Mingled with the summer dreams
Of lilies white on placid streams ;

You shall woo a mermaid fair,
You shall fright the imp of care,
'Twixt a dove's wings you shall ride,
Down a cloud-bank you shall slide !

You shall fill a wind-rocked nest,
In a witch's palace rest,
You shall gather flowers afield,
You shall wear a turtle's shield,
By a butterfly be snared,
By a tiny kobold scared ;
You shall soar in a balloon,
You shall dance in magic shoon ;

Which will suit you ? Pause and choose
Ere my visions I unloose.





UNDER THE ELECTRIC LIGHT.

How cold and still! The keen, clear air

Sparkles with snow-dust crystalline;

To right, to left, and everywhere

The great lamps of the city shine.

Against the distant darkness dense

The huge electric torches blaze,

Colorless suns of light intense

That send on every side their rays;

White, blinding orbs that dazzling flare

O'er the cold snow with colder glare.

In years gone by, when lightning flashed

Piercing the sky with zigzag fire,

And at its heels the thunder crashed

Pealing through heaven, an awful choir,

